



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 24, 2012

Commissioner Goldmark convenes Forest Health Technical Advisory Committee

Deteriorating forest conditions may affect up to 2.8 million acres

OLYMPIA – Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark today announced the new members of the Forest Health Technical Advisory Committee.

In November 2011, Goldmark initiated the state's Forest Health Hazard Warning system, calling for formation of a technical committee of foresters, scientists, and other experts.

The committee's charge is to advise Goldmark on the severity of the threats, areas of the state where corrective actions would be best prioritized, and what kind of actions would be most effective.

"I am alarmed at the health of our forests," said Goldmark. "We are honored to receive the assistance of these preeminent experts. I have tasked them with assessing where we stand and advising me on actions that should be taken to avert further damage."

Chaired by State Forester Aaron Everett, it is anticipated that the advisory committee recommendations will come in the spring so that timely action, including possible Forest Health Hazard Warnings or Orders, can be taken to protect eastern Washington forests.

In the past several years, Washington has seen a significant deterioration of forest conditions and widespread damage to trees throughout eastern Washington. Projections show significantly elevated tree-kill is likely to occur across 2.8 million acres in eastern Washington over the next 15 years. That's roughly one-third of the entire forest landscape.

The number of acres damaged by forest insects and diseases in Washington over the past decade is 150 percent greater than it was in the 1990s, and 200 percent greater than in the 1980s.

Forest Health Technical Advisory Committee

Name	Title	Organization
Aaron Everett, Chair	State Forester	Department of Natural Resources
Reese Lolley	Eastern WA Forest Program Director	The Nature Conservancy
Greg Morris	Fisheries Habitat Biologist	Yakama Nation
Bill Gaines	Wildlife Ecologist	WA Conservation Science Institute
Robert Gara	Prof. Emeritus, Forest Entomology	University of Washington

Connie Mehmel	Forest Entomologist	US Forest Service, Wenatchee
Dave Peterson	Fire Applications Research Team	US Forest Service, PNW Research Station
Scott Ketchum	Northern Inland Region Manager	Forest Capital Partners
Doug Daoust	Asst. Director, State & Private Forestry	US Forest Service, PNW Region

Forest Health Hazard Warning process

The state's Forest Health Law was updated in 2007 to address the declining health of forests in eastern Washington. Under the law, DNR developed the Forest Health Hazard Warning process:

- DNR identifies that the insect/disease activity in forests is uncharacteristically severe and likely to affect many landowners.
- The Commissioner of Public Lands convenes a technical committee to review the situation and make recommendations on the threat's severity and the management options.
- The Commissioner of Public Lands conducts public hearings in affected areas. Committee recommendations and local input help determine what actions are needed, such as forest health treatments and whether a Forest Health Hazard Warning is necessary.
- DNR notifies landowners in the designated 'warning areas' and asks them to implement voluntary forest treatments. DNR also provides technical assistance and coordinates the forest treatment projects.
- If monitoring progress under a 'warning area' shows that threats have not abated, the technical committee may recommend the Commissioner issue a Forest Health Hazard Order for severe, localized threats to forest conditions. Landowners in those areas who do not take remedial action within designated time frames are advised of potential liability for firefighting costs should a wildfire occur in untreated areas on their land. (The liability is waived if the forest health problem originated on public lands).

Media Contact: Bryan Flint, Communications and Outreach Director, 360-902-1023, bryan.flint@dnr.wa.gov

###